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The Irish Question.



THE CHICAGO CONVENTION:

BY

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THE CHICAGO CONVENTION.

PART I.

WHAT THE CONVENTION DID.

THE Convention of the Irish race in America, which assembled in Chicago on the 18th August, 1886, has attracted so much attention in England, and has been the subject of so much misrepresentation by the enemies of Ireland, that it is desirable that its character, spirit, and work, should be clearly made known to the public.

We will first state what the Convention really did, and then what it did not do.

NUMBER OF DELEGATES.

The total number of delegates who assembled was 972—almost every State and Territory in the American Union being represented; and an evidence of the growth of the movement was supplied by the presence, in addition, of a delegation from each of the provinces of Canada.

The following is the official list of delegates :—

Alabama,	...	...	3	Tennessee,	...	...	23
California,	...	...	11	Rhode Island,	...	...	8
Colorado,	...	...	2	Wisconsin,	...	...	58
Connecticut,	...	...	11	Kansas,	...	...	2
Delaware,	...	...	4	Illinois,	...	...	78
Georgia,	...	...	10	Nebraska,	...	...	11
Indiana,	...	...	22	New Jersey,	...	...	25
Kentucky,	...	...	14	Pennsylvania,	...	...	114
Ohio,	...	...	18	Iowa,	...	...	66
Maryland,	...	...	17	Ontario,	...	...	17
District of Columbia,	...	...	13	Quebec,	...	...	7
New Hampshire,	...	...	1	Louisiana,	...	...	75
Montana Territory,	...	...	6	Texas,	...	...	9
Vermont,	...	...	1	Virginia,	...	...	1
Florida,	...	...	1	Massachusetts,	...	...	48
New York,	...	...	160	Missouri,	...	...	27
Michigan,	...	...	69				
Minnesota,	...	...	12	Total,	...	...	972

No man who knows anything of the facts will venture to deny that this was a representation of the overwhelming majority of the Irish people in North America. Many of the branches represented numbered thousands of enrolled members.

THE COMMITTEES AND RESOLUTIONS.

Committees, consisting of one representative chosen by each state delegation, were appointed to deal with :—(1) Resolutions ; (2) Permanent Organization ; (3) Finance ; and (4) Constitution.

The Irish delegates, namely, Mr. Michael Davitt, Mr. Wm. O'Brien, Mr. J. E. Redmond, M.P., and Mr. John Deasy, M.P., were elected as honorary members of "the Committee on Resolutions ;" but they took no part whatever in framing the resolutions adopted.

The resolutions recommended to the Convention by this Committee were adopted unanimously, and are as follows :—

"We, the delegates of the Irish National League of America, in convention assembled, firmly believing in the principles of human freedom, and in the right of a people to frame their own laws—a right which lies at the foundation of the prosperity and greatness of this Republic, and *which has been advantageously extended to the colonial possessions of Great Britain*—do hereby resolve :—

"1. That we express our heartiest and most unqualified approval of national self-government for Ireland.

"2. That we heartily approve of the course pursued by Charles Stewart Parnell and his Parliamentary associates in the English House of Commons ; and we renew the expression of entire confidence in their wisdom, and in their ability to achieve Home Rule in Ireland.

"3. That we extend our heartfelt thanks to Mr. Gladstone for his great efforts in behalf of Irish self-government, and we express our gratitude to the English, Scotch, and Welsh democracy, for the support given to the great Liberal Leader and his Irish policy, during the recent general elections.

"4. That this Convention hereby returns its thanks to the American people and press, for the generous support which they have given to the cause of self-government in Ireland.

"5. That we record our sense of the remarkable forbearance and self-restraint exercised by our people in Ireland, in the face of the cruel and

dishonest system of extortion to which they are being subjected by rack-renting landlords ; and in view of the licence scandalously extended to organized lawlessness in the North of Ireland by partisan officials ; and we commend the laudable desire of the people of Ireland to manage their own affairs in their own way.

“6. That we hereby thank the President, Treasurer, and Secretary of the Irish National League, for the faithful and efficient manner in which they have discharged the arduous duties of their respective situations.

“7. That the following cablegram be forwarded, in the name of the Chairman of the Convention, to the Hon. Charles Stewart Parnell :—

“‘Delegates to the Irish National League Convention of America send greeting from our body, which embraces representative citizens from every State and Territory in the Union, and also from Canada, and assure you of a cordial endorsement of your policy by a united and harmonious Convention.’”

The significance of those declarations, which, indeed, is self-evident, we shall point out further on.

THE BALANCE SHEET.

The Rev. Dr. O'Reilly, of Detroit, Michigan, the Honorary Treasurer of the Irish National League of America, then submitted his balance sheet, which was passed and adopted, and which was as follows :—

PARLIAMENTARY FUND.

Cash on hand reported to Boston Convention,	\$4,739
Cash received at Boston Convention,	1,111
Interest on deposit,	175
Receipts from all other sources,	314,257
Total,	\$320,282
Transmitted to C. S. Parnell and Trustees of the Parliamentary Fund,	314,452
Balance on hand,	\$5,830

LEAGUE FUND.

Cash on hand reported at Boston Convention,	\$4,731
Cash received at Boston Convention,	3,562
Cash guaranteed at Boston Convention,	200
Received from Branches,	21,741
Received from donations,	904
Received from Patrick Egan (salary returned),	3,000
Total,	\$34,138
Transmitted to Mr. William O'Brien, Ireland,	4,847
Guarantee unpaid,	200
Expense Treasurer's office (two years),	1,527
Expense Secretary's office (two years),	2,897
General expenses,	3,752
Expense of two organizers,	1,859
Patrick Egan, one year's salary,	3,000
Total,	\$18,082
Balance on hand,	\$16,056

Those figures also tell their own tale. They show that the sympathy of the Irish in America with the political and social movement of the Irish people in Ireland, is no mere lip-sympathy, but is a deep and abiding sentiment, which finds expression in a form which even the most sceptical cannot ridicule.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS.

The election of officers for the coming year was next proceeded with; and Mr. John Fitzgerald, of Lincoln, Nebraska, was chosen President; the Rev. Dr. O'Reilly, Detroit, Michigan, Treasurer; and Mr. John P. Sutton, Secretary.

The *Chicago Tribune*, one of the leading American (not Irish-American) journals of the United States, thus describes the new President of the League in America :—

“ Mr. John Fitzgerald, the new President, was born near Glin, a romantic little town, famous in the days of the Desmonds, in the western part of Limerick County, Ireland, about fifty-five years ago, and came to

America fifteen or sixteen years later. He sought in Wisconsin and Minnesota for the land where manly toil surely reaps the crop it sows, and, without unnecessary delay, set himself to the hard work which usually falls to the hands of the unfriended immigrant. He was a lad of energy and push. Railroad building was the principal occupation of the newly arrived Irishman. He laid ties and rails at the current daily wages for a few months, advanced to the position of foreman before he was out of his teens, and was a contractor for building railroads when he had attained his majority. His success was remarkable. He built a large portion of the North-Western Road and its branches, and later laid many miles of track and ties of the Union Pacific. At this time he resided in Wisconsin. As the Pacific Road advanced westward, he moved to Nebraska, where he began to experiment as a farmer and cattle raiser with profit and advantage. He continued in his business as contractor, however, and growing rich of course, became a banker. He is now president of the First National Bank of Lincoln, also president of a bank at Plattsmouth. He owns several extensive farms at Minnesota, Nebraska, and Colorado, and three or four herds of fancy cattle, and has a couple of well-stocked ranches besides. He is reputed to be worth 5,000,000 dollars—the reward of close attention to business, and careful industry. In politics he is a Democrat of the old school, and was a delegate-at-large from his State to the Democratic National Convention two years ago. He has been connected with all the Irish patriotic movements in this country since he attained to manhood. He is an ardent disciple of Father Mathew.”

In a word, Mr. Fitzgerald is a specimen of the highest type of American citizen—a man who is a credit equally to the land of his birth and to that of his adoption. His latest act as President, has been to subscribe out of his own private purse the sum of three thousand dollars to the Evicted Tenants' Relief Fund.

PART II.

WHAT THE CONVENTION DID NOT DO.

As soon as the enemies of the Irish cause found that the Convention had signally disappointed their sinister predictions of

internal dissensions, they sedulously set to work to misrepresent what it actually did, and to distort and garble what the Irish delegates and others said in their speeches. The accusations against the Convention which have appeared—some of them in the London newspapers, some of them in the speeches of Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Hartington in the last session of parliament—may fairly be stated as follows :—

1. That the Convention did not thoroughly endorse Mr. Parnell's action and accept Mr. Gladstone's Bill.
2. That "a strike against rent" was proclaimed at the Convention ; and
3. That it urged the adoption of a more advanced policy generally on the Irish party.

These statements we shall deal with separately.

DID THE CONVENTION DECLINE TO ACCEPT MR. GLADSTONE'S BILL?

The answer to this question is supplied by the resolutions already quoted. The Convention, in the preamble to the resolution, defined beyond all possibility of doubt the kind of settlement of the Irish question which they would accept. They say:—"We, the delegates of the Irish National League of America, in Convention assembled, firmly believing in the principles of human freedom, and in *the right of a people to frame their own laws*, a right which lies at the foundation of the prosperity and greatness of this Republic, and *which has been advantageously extended to the colonial possessions of Great Britain*, do hereby resolve," etc.

So that, so far from making a claim for separation, the Convention distinctly asked for Ireland only such a right of "framing her own laws" as has been "advantageously extended to the Colonial possessions of Great Britain."

The Convention then proceeded to "heartily approve of the course pursued by Charles Stewart Parnell and his parliamentary associates in the English House of Commons." That course, as all the world knows, included the acceptance by the Irish Par-

liamentary Party and its chief, in the name of the Irish race throughout the world, of Mr. Gladstone's Bill, as a final settlement of the Irish question.

As if to make its position still more clear, the Convention next proceeded to express its "heartfelt thanks to Mr. Gladstone, for his great efforts on behalf of Irish self-government," and to express their "gratitude to the English, Scotch, and Welsh democracies, for the support given to the great Liberal leader and his Irish policy during the recent general elections."

So far as the resolutions go, it is therefore clear that the *Convention endorsed the attitude towards Mr. Gladstone's bill, which the Irish Parliamentary Party from the first maintained.* When we consider the feeling of bitter hatred to English rule which the Irish in America have ever entertained, this fact constitutes the most remarkable proof that has yet been given of the wonderful change in the feelings of Irishmen in general wrought by Mr. Gladstone's generous and noble policy.

Judge Fitzgerald, of Cincinnati, ex-Speaker of the Ohio Parliament, who was Chairman of the Convention, spoke as follows :—

"We hate England, because she has hated, and robbed, and plundered our nation and our people (applause). And when the day of hate ceases, there are no people on earth whose hearts are more ready to forgive than Irish hearts (applause). When they give us even a stinted measure of rights for our people, then and not till then shall we cease hating the tyrants (cheers). Look at the generous hearts of our people throughout the land, in their expressions of gratitude to the greatest, noblest living English statesman (applause). The people of our land—the American citizens—thank him and those behind him (cheers). To the people of Scotland and Wales, who came up nobly in that last election, and said that the Irish people were entitled to the God-given right of fixing their own domestic affairs and legislating on matters purely personal to them—to them everywhere millions of hearts should go out in thankful remembrance (applause). And to the democracy of England, who are willing, even at this late day, to give our people a stinted measure of justice, we all extend our heartfelt thanks" (applause).

This, assuredly, was the language of a frank and honest man.

Mr. William O'Brien, in one of his speeches, put the point plainly to the assembly. He said :—

“ You in America hold the fate of our cause in the hollow of your hands. That tremendous power of yours involves a tremendous responsibility. It is of supreme importance that our position should be made clear beyond the possibility of misrepresentation. It would be cowardly and false on our part to forget that we have now friends as well as enemies in England. There are 1,500,000 of English workingmen, who have registered their votes in favour of an Irish Parliament in College Green. There is one great Englishman who is worth another 1,500,000. We told Mr. Gladstone—we told all Englishmen, that if they reached out an honest hand of friendship to Ireland they would not reach it out in vain. We were perfectly frank with them. We told them candidly, that to English rule in Ireland we are and will for ever remain irreconcilable ; and until they can exterminate the last man of our race, they will never have rest nor peace, until the hopes that have lived through seven centuries, shall have blossomed at last over our land. But we told them also that our quarrel with England was bounded by her rule within the four shores of Ireland. We told them that upon the day when the working millions of England, by their votes and of their own free will, hauled down the flag of English domination in Ireland, the hatreds and passions which have raged for ages between the two countries would subside. We ventured to promise that, for you as well as for our people at home, and standing here in the presence of this great representative gathering of Irish-Americans, who would be only too proud to shed their heart's blood in the cause of Ireland on the battlefield, I am not afraid to repeat that promise in your name. If we are wrong in that, we are wrong in everything ; for it is the root and the essence of our movement, that it is possible to conciliate Ireland without injuring England. We have promised for you, and you have promised for yourselves. The resolutions of the Convention are a message to all the world, that peace and friendship were within the grasp of England, if she had been as wise and bold as Mr. Gladstone ; aye, and that peace and friendship are within her grasp even yet, upon the day when she once more enthrones Mr. Gladstone in power, and commissions him to conclude his treaty of peace with the Irish nation.”

Mr. O'Brien, when he spoke in the House of Commons in support of Mr. Gladstone's bill, and uttered practically the same opinions as he expressed at Chicago, was challenged by the then

Tory leader of the House of Commons, now the Chief Secretary for Ireland, to repeat his speech outside Parliament. It is to be hoped that Sir Michael Hicks-Beach will take an early opportunity of admitting that his challenge has been accepted, and of stating the result.

Mr. J. E. Redmond, M.P., spoke in the same strain. He said :—

“The one great principle of any settlement of the Irish question, must be the recognition of the divine right of Irishmen, and Irishmen alone, to rule Ireland. This is the principle in support of which you are assembled here to-day; this is the principle which guides our movement in Ireland. But consistently with that principle we believe it is possible to bring about a settlement honorable to England and Ireland alike—whereby the wrongs and miseries of the past may be forgotten; whereby the chapter of English wrongs and Irish resistance may be closed; and whereby a future of freedom *and of unity between the two nations* may be inaugurated. *Such a settlement, we believe, was offered to us by Mr. Gladstone;* and, quite apart from the increased strength which Mr. Gladstone’s proposals, even though temporarily defeated, have given to our cause, we have, I think, reason to rejoice at the opportunity which they have afforded to our suffering and exasperated people, to show the magnanimity of their natures, and the unalloyed purity of their love of liberty. What a spectacle Ireland afforded to the world, when at last one great Englishman arose bold and wise enough to do justice to her character. Ages of heartless oppression and bitter wrong—hundreds of thousands of martyrs to Irish freedom—ages of stupid religious persecution—ages of depopulation and State-created famine—never-ending insult and ruthless calumny—all in that one moment were forgotten, and the feelings uppermost in the hearts of the Irish race, at home and abroad, were—gratitude to the aged statesman who simply proposed to do justice, and anxiety for a ‘blessed oblivion of the past.’ Who, in the face of the reception given to the bill of Mr. Gladstone, cramped and deformed as it was by humiliating safeguards and unnecessary limitations, will dare to say that the principle of our movement is merely race hatred to England? No. Last April, Ireland was ready to forget and forgive. She was ready to sacrifice many things for peace, so long as the one essential principle for which she struggled was conceded (applause). She was willing, on the day when the portals of her ancient Senate House were

re-opened, to shake hands with her hereditary foe, and to proclaim peace between the democracies of the two nations, whom the Almighty had placed side by side to be friends, but who had been kept apart by the avarice, the passions, and the injustice of a few (applause). What centuries of oppression had failed to do, seemed about to be accomplished by one word of conciliation, by one act of justice."

Mr. Michael Davitt, Mr. John Deasy, M.P., and, in fact, all the speakers at the Convention, spoke in the same spirit, amid universal applause. Both by formal resolution, and by the voices of all who spoke, therefore, the Convention, composed of the bitterest enemies of English rule in Ireland, enthusiastically accepted Mr. Gladstone's bill as a treaty, on the basis of which an honorable and permanent peace might be established between England and Ireland. This great fact cannot be denied, though unscrupulous efforts have been made to obscure it.

WAS "A STRIKE AGAINST RENT" PROCLAIMED AT THE CONVENTION ?

The statement that "a strike against rent" was proclaimed at the Convention, has been made by Lord Hartington in the House of Commons, and by *The Times* newspaper. It is utterly devoid of truth. The agrarian question was, in fact, but little alluded to at Chicago.

The resolutions, so far from advocating a "no-rent policy," recorded the approval by the Convention of "the remarkable forbearance and self-restraint exercised by our people in Ireland, in the face of the cruel and dishonest system of extortion to which they are subjected by rack-renting landlords." The speeches made at the Convention no more proclaimed "a strike against rent," than did those in the recent debate in the House of Commons, in which it was pointed out, that owing to the fall in prices, the full judicial rent in many cases had become excessive and impossible.

Lord Hartington specifically accused Mr. J. E. Redmond, M.P., with having advocated a "no-rent" policy at the Convention.

The accusation is grounded upon the following passages from his speech :—

“In the coming Winter, the laws of nature itself will forbid the possibility of peace. For the last six months, the tenant-farmers of Ireland have played a part too little known and appreciated here. They submitted to untold privations, and sufferings, and exactions, in patience and in silence, lest by one word or act of theirs they should embarrass their leaders in Parliament, or retard by one moment the concession of Home Rule. The landlords of Ireland noted, but totally misunderstood the meaning of the change of attitude. They mistook forbearance and patriotism for cowardice, and the crowbar brigade once more set to work.

“Still the tenants suffered in silence. Mr. Gladstone proposed a land bill which would have bought out the landlords at an extravagantly high figure, yet the Irish tenants were ready, because it was coupled with the concession of Home Rule, to pay this exorbitant sum as the price to be paid for National freedom. Once more Irish landlords have behaved with unaccountable folly and stupidity. They have once more stood between Ireland and her freedom; and have refused even an extravagant price for their land, because the offer was coupled with the concession of an Irish Parliament. So be it. I believe the last offer has been made to Irish landlordism. The ultimate settlement of this question must now be reserved for the Parliament of Ireland, and meantime the people must take care to protect themselves and their children. *In many parts of Ireland, I assert, rent is to-day an impossibility, and in every part of Ireland the rents demanded are exorbitant, and cannot be paid.*”

The words printed in italics are those relied on to substantiate the charge of having preached a “no rent policy.” It would, however, be interesting to compare the statement, that “in many parts of Ireland rent is to-day an impossibility,” with the statement made last March by *The Times*, on the authority of Sir James Caird, that “on 538,000 holdings in Ireland, rented at £3,572,000 per annum, the rent is practically irrecoverable by anybody, whether landlord, English Government, or Irish Government.” It would be equally interesting to inquire how the statement, that in many parts of Ireland “the rents demanded are exorbitant and cannot be paid,” is untrue, in view of the recent

statement by Mr. Giffen—that the prices of all kinds of farm produce in Ireland, have within the last eighteen months, *i.e.*, since these rents were fixed, fallen on an average about 20 per cent. No strike against rent was proclaimed at Chicago; but the plain undisputed fact was pointed out, that the payment in full of the old rent had in many cases become impossible. In how many cases it has become impossible is the question. Neither Mr. Redmond, nor any other member of the Irish Party, or representative of the Irish tenantry, has ventured to go so far as Sir James Caird or *The Times* newspaper. But the question would have been determined by Mr. Parnell's Tenants' Bill.

DID THE CONVENTION URGE ANY NEW POLICY UPON MR. PARNELL?

The attitude of Irish-Americans upon this point was repeatedly emphasized. Judge Fitzgerald opened the proceedings with the following remarkable statement:—

“It has been mooted along in some dark corners, that a resolution will be presented here to-day, dictating a policy to those directly interested in the objects of this Convention. There may be a mad-house not far from here—[cheers and laughter]—and there may be an escaped lunatic from that house. But, lunatic or not, no matter who he may be, if such a man should dare to show his brazen head in this Convention, and should for one moment dictate or suggest a policy to Parnell and the Irish Parliamentary Party, I anticipate that your serjeant-at-arms could not prevent this multitude of good and true men from rising in their might and ejecting the crazy fellow (cheers). I promise you, Sirs [meaning the delegates from Ireland], that from this Convention there shall emanate but one sentiment, but one action, and that is for Ireland—to follow in your wake, not to direct, not to dictate, not to suggest.”

Mr. J. E. Redmond, M.P., on behalf of the leaders at home, made it perfectly clear that no attempt at dictation from America would be successful, even were it made. He said:—

“Well, but for the future, what is the policy, and who are to be the framers of that policy? Here I come to the second point I mentioned at the beginning—namely, the condition upon which alone we can value your confidence or accept your support. So long as we are true to the great principle of Irish nationality, resolutely refusing either to be bought

or coerced from a rigid adherence to the full measure of national right, and so long as we are able to point to our past policy as honest and successful, we say we and no others are entitled to decide for ourselves upon Irish soil, and upon our own responsibility, what our policy for the future is to be (applause). This is the condition upon which you have given your support to us in the past, and it is the condition upon which alone we can accept your support for the future."

In the face of a declaration like this, to pretend for a moment that the Convention urged on Mr. Parnell and the Irish Parliamentary Party, a more "advanced" or "extreme" policy than they had publicly pledged themselves to in the House of Commons, is an impudent and a malicious, as well as a weak invention of the enemy.

SUMMING UP.

To sum up this part, it is indisputable that :—

(1) The Convention recognized in Mr. Gladstone's bill an honest attempt to settle upon an honourable and satisfactory basis the relations between England and Ireland.

(2) It tendered to Mr. Gladstone, and the English, Scotch, and Welsh democracy, its heartfelt thanks, and recognized the fact, that henceforth, not the people of Great Britain, but only a small portion of the people of England, are to be regarded as the enemies of Ireland.

(3) It assured Mr. Parnell of its approval of his past action in Parliament in accepting Mr. Gladstone's bill, and generally.

(4) So far from proclaiming a new no-rent policy for Ireland, it specifically disclaimed all right or desire to dictate, or even suggest, any line of action whatever to the leaders of the movement at home.

PART III.

THE FINERTY INCIDENT.

There was one man in the Convention who refused to acquiesce in the resolutions adopted ; and the utterances of this one individual have received more attention from a section of the British press, than the declarations of the remaining 971 delegates all put together. The reason is not far to seek. The Convention emphatically and boldly endorsed the attitude towards Mr. Gladstone's bill which Mr. Parnell had adopted. Mr. John Finerty, on the contrary, openly declared that *he* would never accept that bill as a final settlement ; and the enemies of Home Rule and Mr. Gladstone instantly seized upon his declaration, as the only crumb of comfort to be obtained from proceedings, to which they had looked forward with so much hope and confidence. The truth is, Mr. Finerty's declaration was regarded with very little concern by the Convention. Everyone who knew anything of his past utterances was perfectly aware of his opinions, and it ought in fairness to him to be stated, that he made no attempt whatever, in his speech, to commit the other delegates to any approval of his statements. He had been chosen as a member of the committee on resolutions ; but so convinced was he that he would be out of sympathy with all the other members, that he refused to act upon it. *He kept his peculiar views to himself until the entire proceedings of the Convention were over, and when he did speak he repeatedly stated that he spoke only for himself.*

The gist of Mr. Finerty's speech is contained in the following extract from it :—

“I am not opposed to Parnell ; but he cannot get me to subscribe to the policy—that Gladstone's Home Rule bill is to be accepted as a final settlement of all Ireland's troubles. I did not vote for your platform. The moment you bow your heads or lower your flag, the English will despise you.”

The moment he resumed his seat, Mr. Davitt rose, and amid universal applause, spoke as follows :—

“He regretted that he had to intrude again upon their attention, but he could not, representing the men at home as he did, with his colleagues, allow Mr. Finerty’s speech to go without a few words of reply. He had come from the people of Ireland with his colleagues, to represent the movement which was endeavouring, by peaceful and constitutional means, to work out the principle of Irish national self-government (cheers). He would be false to his mission, and the principles of that movement—he would be betraying the trust reposed in him by Mr. Parnell and the people of Ireland—if he did not make this protest against the speech which had been delivered by Mr. Finerty. The movement had been sneered at by their enemies on the other side of the water, and Mr. Finerty found fault with its methods. The movement was peaceable. Resting upon moral force as it did, would not Mr. Finerty admit that Ireland had been elevated into a position which she had never occupied before? (cheers).

“MR. FINERTY.—I never denied it.

“MR. DAVITT said, by their policy they had won the sympathy of the American people (cheers). They had succeeded in converting even those who were heretofore their enemies, and convinced 2,000,000 of the British people that their struggle was right, and their sympathy had been extended to them in their effort to make the struggle successful (applause). Surely if the movement had accomplished so much in a short time, it was capable, when represented by true men, of doing in a short time what they all wished to do for their native land—(cheers)—to win for Ireland the right, and dignity, and position of a nation (applause). The Convention had approved of their platform and their principles—had sent resolutions across the Atlantic, pledging support on present lines, and promising material assistance in the near future. He only wanted this decision guarded, so that no other decision contrary to it should follow that message, to discourage the people of Ireland and give satisfaction to the enemies of the Irish cause (cheers). He had as much respect for John Finerty as ever, and believed him to be as honest an Irishman as lived in America. His policy and his methods he would not pass sentence upon. They had had their trial. They had not succeeded in winning Irish freedom.

“MR. FINERTY.—Neither has yours.

“MR. DAVITT claimed that the present policy had advanced the cause more in seven years than it had progressed in the last fifty years (cheers and cries of ‘You are right’). He asked that they be not embarrassed in their work—that they forbear with them on peaceful and constitutional lines. This was not an unreasonable request, when they thought

that 4,000,000 in Ireland, and 19 out of every 20 of the race in America, endorsed the movement, approved the policy, and supported the leader" (cheers).

Mr. Redmond also replied to Mr. Finerty. He said :—

"As Mr. Finerty's speech was certain to be quoted by the enemy through the English press, it was only right he should say something, especially as his speech was referred to by Mr. Finerty. I feel it my duty [continued Mr. Redmond] to say one word in this matter, and it will be a word of perfect good humour. Mr. Finerty did not do justice to my remarks, if he said they were in advance of the resolutions of the Convention. It is those resolutions, and nothing else, which will go forth to the world as the expression of this Convention. The opinions of this Convention are expressed in the records, and Mr. Finerty spoke here after the deliberative work of the Convention was over, and did not express anything but his own opinions, and they could not therefore go forth as identified with the Convention. I have only risen—in fairness to my colleagues on this platform and abroad—in fairness to myself, and to state, that my remarks to-day were in close keeping with the resolutions, and to state that Mr. Finerty was not speaking for the Convention."

In the face of these facts and these declarations, it will be seen how dishonest and absurd is the attempt to prove, that, because Mr. Finerty dissented from the resolutions, therefore the Convention which, with the single exception of himself, unanimously adopted these resolutions, did not believe in them.

On this point, Mr. William O'Brien, speaking at a meeting of the National League in Dublin, a few days after his return from America, said :—

"Those resolutions were, practically speaking, unanimously adopted by that great Convention, with the single exception of Mr. Finerty, who stated his own opinions on the matter. They were, practically speaking, unanimously adopted by what they call a 'rising vote,' every man upon his feet cheering. Of course it is always possible, even after all that, for Mr. Chamberlain and for *The Times* to say that the Convention said one thing and that they meant another. Of course it is always possible to treat us as if we were a nation of liars and hypocrites. All I can say is, that I wish Mr. Chamberlain or any other man alive, had attempted to induce that Convention, for policy's sake or prudence sake, or expedience, or any other consideration under the sun—had at-

tempted to force or cajole them into swallowing a single resolution or a syllable that they believed in the slightest degree derogatory to Irish nationality, or to anything like lowering the flag. The man who tried it would be a bolder man than the man that swam down the Niagara rapids the day we were in that neighbourhood."

Colonel Atkinson of Detroit, at the great mass meeting held in Chicago, the night after the Convention, spoke as follows :—

"This meeting he considered a sort of ratification of the action of the Convention. As a member of the Committee on Resolutions, he could say that there was no division of opinion, and no reading between the lines in the resolutions, but a plain statement of facts. The gentlemen from Ireland, who were made members of the committee, had refused to draft a single resolution, but had left all to the judgment of their brethren on this side of the water."

The Finerty incident then simply amounted to this: that in an assembly consisting of 972 delegates, one individual alone dissented from the resolutions adopted; and in order that his opinions should be clearly understood, claimed and obtained the right to explain, that he did not believe in Mr. Gladstone's bill as a final settlement, and would not pin his faith, under all circumstances, to peaceable methods. *Lest these sentiments should be held to compromise the Convention, they were at once, and amid universal applause, repudiated by Mr. Davitt, Mr. Redmond, and others.* This incident, indeed, so far from detracting from the value of the support tendered to Mr. Parnell and Mr. Gladstone, ought, on the contrary, to enhance it, by emphasizing what was an unexpectedly cordial and unanimous acceptance of a policy of peace and friendship by a body of men who, before the introduction of the Home Rule bill, were bitter and apparently implacable enemies of England.

PART IV.

AMERICAN SYMPATHY.

The Convention was the means of eliciting a most remarkable expression of sympathy with Ireland from Americans of all American political parties.

The night after the Convention closed its proceedings, a mass meeting of the citizens of Chicago was held, to discuss the Irish question. The Republican Governor of the State of Illinois, Governor Oglesby, was among the speakers; and so was the Hon. Samuel J. Randall, a member of Congress, one of the leaders of the Democratic party, and for some time Speaker of the House of Representatives at Washington. In the course of an eloquent speech, Mr. Randall said:—

“No cause like this can go down. We must succeed. We will win. You need have to fear. The end, I trust, is nearly reached when freedom, liberty, and self-government will control in Ireland. And now in conclusion, I want to say—give these men good cheer—give them to understand that we have not abated in any degree in the cause that they are engaged in, and let them go back to the Grand Old Man, that hero and statesman, Mr. Gladstone, and tell him that American enlightenment of the nineteenth century presents a united voice in approval of the course that he has pursued. He *is* a Grand Old Man, the greatest, in my judgment, that has existed during my period. He was equal to the occasion. He has suffered, as the American colonies suffered, temporary defeat. But the defeat will bring him, as it brought finally the American colonies, a united people even in England, in the direction that he has pointed out. Never was a more truthful word said, than when he declared that the issue of the present time in Great Britain was between the masses and classes. And let me say that there has come, and there is in this country to-day, a better feeling towards the English people, than ever before since our Revolutionary War, because the English masses to-day, so far as they can, have determined to give free government to Ireland.”

The entire American Press, in its comments on the Convention, showed itself to be on the side of Ireland, and heartily supported Mr. Gladstone's policy. We give a few illustrative extracts from

a few of the leading organs of public opinion, not one of them being Irish :—

From *The Detroit Evening News*.

“The Convention, as a whole, was an honour to the race which it represented, an honour to the cause which it seeks to elevate, and an honour to the adopted country of its delegates.”

From *The New York Herald*.

“It had been predicted that the Convention would disagree. But the dictum of a body that comes as near to being an Irish parliament as any body at this time can be, goes out to the world with the force of unqualified unanimity.”

From *The New York Morning Journal*.

“The Chicago Convention of the National League has produced a glorious moral effect. It has inspired with courage the despondent hearts of Irishmen at home who behold in Tory rule a coming repetition of the old, weary, grinding oppression. It has nerved the Parnellites, cheered the iron heart of the Grand Old Man, and proved to the enemies of Ireland that a solid phalanx guards the rere.”

From *The Chicago Tribune*.

“The people of Ireland, and their leaders both in Ireland and America, are to be congratulated on the happy outcome of this most representative and harmonious convention. The delegates proved themselves worthy of the trust confided in them. They have been self-restrained, prudent, and loyal to Parnell, and his great ally, Mr. Gladstone. The proceedings are ample evidence of the Irish capacity for self-government.”

From *The Philadelphia Press*.

“The League Convention at Chicago has confounded the enemies and encouraged the friends of Home Rule in Ireland. It has proved to be an imposing, temperate, harmonious, and successful assembly. It has spoken the voice, and fixed the attitude of the great body of Irish-Americans, with a moderation, clearness and firmness, that will strengthen the cause of Irish self-government, and uphold the hands of their compatriots who are leading the struggle in Parliament. Ranking among the largest and most important gatherings, the Irish-Americans have ever held its discreet counsels, its reasonable tone, and its prudent action, will exert a potent and wholesome influence on both sides of the sea.

"The enemies of Home Rule counted upon dissensions and conflicts. They had hoped for divisions and for declarations, which would embarrass Mr. Parnell and Mr. Gladstone, in their legitimate and constitutional struggle for the establishment of Irish rights. In all these expectations they were completely disappointed. The resolutions are distinguished for their calm, dignified, and moderate tone. They express the strongest devotion to national self-government for Ireland, unqualified confidence in Mr. Parnell and his associates, gratitude to Mr. Gladstone and the Liberal masses of England, Scotland, and Wales, and just sense of the forbearance, self-restraint, and patient purpose of the people of Ireland."

From The Philadelphia Record.

"If there be any people who still lay the flattering unction to their souls, that Irishmen are unfitted to exercise the right of self-government, they should certainly have their minds disabused of that idea, after reading the account of yesterday's proceedings of the Irish National League Convention at Chicago. It is questionable if, with the temptations held out, with the smouldering feeling of resentment in so many hearts, and the favourable character of the environment for the expression of the most radical ideas, any deliberative body in Christendom could have shown more wisdom, or better fulfilled the expectations of those who were watching its course so earnestly. The resolutions which were adopted, while breathing a spirit of independence, carry with them neither threat nor defiance. Starting with the principle of national self-government as their foundation, they recognize the legitimate efforts which have been made to bring this about for Ireland, and pledge the support of the League to Mr. Parnell, in the policy which he has carried on so successfully, and which he has determined to continue. There is no denunciation of men or methods, no dragging in of personal grievances or animosities, but an eloquent presentation of the aims and ends of all true Irishmen—eloquent if for nothing else, but its manly straightforwardness and simplicity. It is difficult to see how even the most rabid of the English press can speak of such a deliverance except in the spirit of commendation, especially as it simply echoes the voice of one million of the English democracy, as expressed at the polls."

Assuredly, Mr. Gladstone was well within the truth, when he claimed that his Home Rule policy had the support of the civilized world.

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